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A
L E T T E R

T O

The Rev. JOHN WESLEY;

W H E R E I N

THAT GENTLEMAN IS CALLED UPON

TO DECLARE WHETHER HE BE, OR BE NOT

THE AUTHOR

OF CERTAIN MALICIOUS CALUMNIES

CAST ON THE LATE

Rev. AUGUSTUS TOPLADY.

By RICHARD HILL, Esq;

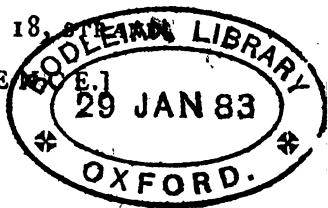
Let GOD be true, and every Man a Liar. Rom. iii. 4.

L O N D O N ;

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M.DCC.LXXX.



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A
L E T T E R
T O

The Rev. JOHN WESLEY.

Hawkestone, Nov. 29, 1779.

Rev. SIR,

THE cause of my thus publicly addressing you, is owing to an information I have received that you wished to know who was the author of a letter, which appeared in the General Advertiser on Friday the 8th of October last, wherein were some queries put to you concerning certain reports which it was supposed you had spread, rela-

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tive to the illness and death of the late Mr. Augustus Toplady. I was further given to understand, that you had declared your intention of answering that letter, if the writer would annex his name to it. This being the case, though names cannot at all alter facts, yet as I really wish to be rightly informed myself, and as the reports which have been propagated about Mr. Toplady have much staggered and grieved many serious Christians, I now (under my real signature) beg with all plainness, and with no other design than that the real truth may be known, again to propound those questions to you which were put in that letter, of which I confess myself to have been the sole author. And as I hear you have been pleased to call the letter a scurrilous one, I should be glad if you would point out to me wherein that scurrility consists; for though it were anonymous, I am not in the least conscious that there was anything in it unbecoming that respect

spect which might be due to a gentleman of your venerable age and function ; and when you have shewn me wherein I have been culpable, I shall then readily and submissively ask your pardon. The letter itself I shall annex to this. The queries contained in it may be reduced to the following.

1st. Did you, Sir, or did you not tell Mr. Thomas Robinson, of Hilderthorpe near Bridlington in Yorkshire, that Mr. Toplady died in black despair, blaspheming ; and that a greater imposition never was imposed on the public than that published by his friends relative to his death ?

2dly. Did you ever tell the same in substance to the Rev. Mr. Greaves*, curate to Mr. Fletcher of Madely, or to any other person ?

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3dly.

* I hope this worthy gentleman, for whom I profess a sincere esteem, will pardon my having introduced his Name without asking his permission.

3dly. Did you or did you not say that none of Mr. Toplady's friends were permitted to see him during his illness?

I now beg leave to tell you, that the cause of my offering these queries to you was owing to the following letter, which I received just before, from a kind friend and worthy minister of the gospel at Burlington (or Bridlington) in Yorkshire.

“ Honored and dear friend,

“ Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied unto you from the Father and from
 “ Jesus Christ, by the blessed Spirit. On the
 “ 21st day of August, 1779, I received from
 “ Mr. Thomas Robinson, of Hilderthorp,
 “ the following awful and no less shocking
 “ account respecting the death of Mr. Toplady. He said Mr. J. Wesley told him,
 “ that Mr. Toplady died in black despair,
 “ blaspheming; and that a greater imposition was never imposed on the public than
 that

“ that published by his friends relative to
 “ his death. He added also, that none of
 “ his friends were permitted to see him
 “ in his illness: and that one of Mr. John
 “ Wesley’s preachers, whose name is Rhodes,
 “ did on the 20th inst. declare, that Mr.
 “ Toplady’s case was equal to that of Francis
 “ Spira; and that the servant who waited
 “ upon him did after his death join Mr.
 “ Wesley’s societies, signifying that there
 “ was something very awful†. Now, dear
 “ Sir, as I know nobody more capable of
 “ giving me some satisfaction respecting
 “ this heart-affecting report than what you
 “ are; please to excuse the liberty I have
 “ taken in troubling you; wishing and be-
 . A 4 feeching

† I cannot believe so ill of Mr. Rhodes as to suppose
 he himself invented this horrid tale. He best knows
 whence he had it. But Mr. Wesley and he being at
 Burlington about the same time, there is reason to sup-
 pose he received it from the same quarter Mr. T. Ro-
 binson did.

" seeing you, to give me if you can, a true
 " account of this gloomy story, and you will
 " very much oblige one who sincerely wishes
 " you the peaceable enjoyment of every
 " temporal and spiritual good. Believing,
 " nevertheless, that the foundation of God
 " standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord
 " knoweth them that are his. The redeemed
 " of the Lord shall return and come with
 " singing unto Sion, &c.

" Dear Sir,

" Believe me to be your sin-
 " cere affectionate friend
 " and humble servant, in the
 " gospel of Christ Jesus our
 " Lord.

Bridlington,
Aug. 30th, 1779.

" J. GAWKRODGER."

Methinks, Sir, this letter breathes the
 language of real christianity, and of an heart
 deeply concerned and interested in the well-
 fare

fare of one from whose works I know that Mr. G. had received the highest delight and satisfaction. He had read the account of Mr. Toplady's illness and death; he rejoiced to see the doctrines of the gospel confirmed and established in the experience of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ; and his own heart found strong consolation whilst he meditated, on the triumphant victory which his late brother in the ministry had obtained over the king of terrors through faith in our glorious Immanuel.

Amidst these views and meditations, he is told by a pious friend and neighbour of his, that Mr. John Wesley had assured him " that Mr. Toplady died blaspheming, in black despair; that none of his friends were permitted to see him in his illness; and that the account of his death published by his friends, was a gross imposition on the public; and that a preacher of Mr. Wesley's had moreover asserted the same, with this further circumstance,

stance, that the person who attended Mr. Toplady in his illness, struck with horror at his awful departure, had joined the Methodists."

Overwhelmed with grief and amazement at this declaration, and the authority produced in defence of it (an authority which he dares not call in question), he writes to me to be further informed of the matter. Upon the receipt of this letter, I thought it best to go to the fountain head in order to investigate the truth, and therefore called upon you in the public papers to know whether or no you did or did not assert the things which are charged upon you. If you did *not* assert them, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Greaves and several other persons have treated you in a manner the most injurious, by making use of the sanction of your name for the propagation of a most wicked and malicious lie. If you *did* assert them, either you *had* or had *not* authority for your assertions; if you had *no* authority,

rity, then you yourself must have been the inventor of them. If you *had* authority, then you must know whence that authority came. In order therefore to exculpate your own character before the world, be pleased now to name that authority. Tell us how you became so well acquainted with what passed in Mr. Toplady's sick chamber and on his dying bed, when even his most dear and intimate friends were not permitted to see him? Did his nurse, Mrs. Starling, who attended him and was with him when he died, communicate this intelligence? I hear she has called upon you on purpose to vindicate herself from the charge of any such assertion; and is ready to declare to all the world, that throughout Mr. Toplady's long illness to the hour of his dissolution, prayer and praise, joy and triumph in the God of his salvation, were the continual employments of his lip and heart. But as your conduct will probably make *one* of the many friends who *were* permit-

ted to see Mr. Toplady in his illness, think it necessary to give the public some further particulars relative to the state of his soul in that trying season, I shall only in this place present you with a short abstract from a letter which I received from a worthy clergyman, a friend of Mr. Toplady's, soon after his departure; his words are as follow.

“ You will be pleased with the two following remarks made by Mr. Toplady not long before his death. “ To a person interested in the salvation of Christ, sickness is no disease, pain no affliction, death no dissolution.”—The other was an answer to Doctor G——d, in consequence of the Doctor's expressing hopes that Mr. Toplady might recover, and be again useful. Mr. Toplady heard what his friend had to say, and then expressed himself nearly in the following words. “ I believe God never gave such manifestations of his love to any creature,

"creature, and suffered him to live."——

Thus far, my friend.

We can now look to no other source from whence these reports may have flowed, than to the most deliberate malice of Mr. Toplady's avowed foes, among whom, notwithstanding your continual preaching about "*love, love; peace, peace my brethren,*" I fear you are chief. Till therefore you produce your authority for what you told Mr. Thomas Robinson and others, I have full right, nay I am absolutely necessitated to fix upon you, Rev. Sir, as the raiser and fabricator of this most nefarious report; which I cannot look upon merely as a common falsity, but as a malicious attempt to invalidate and set aside the testimony which God the eternal Spirit himself was pleased to bear to his own truth and to his own work upon the heart of a dying believer; and even to turn that testimony into the blasphemies of Satan. And in this view of it, how far short it falls of the unpardonable

able sin against the Holy Ghost, must be left to your awful consideration.

When one Jane Cowper, a person belonging to your societies died, you were ready enough to give your imprimatur and recommendation to every wild flight of fancy she uttered, as "all strong sterling sense, strictly agreeable to sound reason." "Here (says Mr. Wesley in the preface) are no extravagant flights; no mystic reveries, no unscriptural enthusiasm. The sentiments are all just and noble."—The cause is plain. The Lord (it seems) had PROMISED this Jane Cowper, "that Mr. J. Wesley's latter works should exceed his former," therefore she must be cannonized†; but Mr. Toplady

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† Notwithstanding this young woman might in some instances be under the influence of a spirit of enthusiasm, yet far be it from me to affirm that the whole of her experience was a delusion. On the contrary, I am persuaded she was a sincere devoted Christian, and believe that she is now in heaven.

in his *dying avowal* had borne his open testimony both against Mr. Wesley and his principles, therefore “ the devil himself could not have invented any thing worse than what he had uttered,” and he must be sent blaspheming and despairing into the bottomless pit. Behold! Sir, what self partiality and a desire to make known your own importance leads you to.—The like spirit runs throughout all your publications, whether sermons, journals, appeals, preservatives, Arminian magazines, &c. &c. in all of which, it is too evident that the grand design in view is that of trumpeting forth your own praises. Tedious and fulsome as this appears in the eyes of men of sense and judgment, yet a gentleman of Mr. Wesley’s cunning and subtlety can from hence *suck no small advantage*, as there are multitudes amongst your own people, who through a blind attachment to your person, and a no less blind zeal to promote your interests, look upon it as perfectly
right

right and proper; and are at all times and upon all occasions ready to pay the most implicit obedience to your *ipse dixits*, and to believe or disbelieve just as you would have them. But I have nothing to do with such bigots: to endeavour to open their eyes by argument, would be as vain as to attempt to wash the Æthiopian white, or to change the leopard's spots. There are, however, many persons of good sense and true piety in your societies, who in spite of all your artifices, begin to form a judgment of you according to facts. It is for the benefit of such persons, as well as to vindicate the memory of a departed saint from your foul aspersions, that you are presented with this epistle; though I confess I was sometime before I could bring myself to write or print it. I considered, that a misjudging prejudiced world would be happy to take advantage from its contents, and to cry "there, there, so would we have
" it;"

“ it;” “ the Methodists † are all fallen together by the ears, and are discharging their artillery at one another.”—I considered again, that as to expose you was not my motive, so to bring you to any submission was never in human power. I had well nigh resolved to be silent. On the other hand, I perceived that the sealing testimony which God vouchsafed to his own truths in the experience of Mr. Toplady during his illness, and at the time of his death, was not only
denied

† I observed upon a former occasion, that the name of Methodist as it is indiscriminately given by way of reproach, to all who have more zeal for religion than is consistent with the fashion of the times, I have no desire to shake off; on the contrary, I would glory in it, as the badge which every real Christian is allotted to wear; and I would pray that I might deserve it much more than I do. But as it conveys the idea of an attachment to the tenets of Mr. Wesley, in opposition to the word of God, and to the doctrines of all the protestant churches, that of this nation in particular; in this view of it, I desire totally to renounce it.

denied by you, but even construed into a gross imposition of his friends to deceive the public, and thereby the good effects which might justly have been hoped for, were in great measure counteracted; that his enemies were hardened against the truths he maintained and so ably vindicated; and even his friends staggered by the shocking accounts forged and propagated: I say when I saw this to be the case, I determined (to adopt an expression of your own) to “*write and print*.” I said *let God be true, and every man a liar*. If you make no reply, I cannot avoid construing your silence into an acquiescence of your being guilty of the matter brought against you. If you do “*write and print*” in answer, let me beg you for once to avoid quibbles and evasions.

I am, Rev. SIR,

Your sincere well wisher, &c.

and most humble servant,

RICHARD HILL.

Copy

Copy of the Letter addressed to the Rev. John Wesley, which appeared in the General Advertiser on the eighth Day of October last.

REV. SIR,

“ I give you this public notice, that
 “ certain persons who are your enemies, per-
 “ haps only because you keep clear of their
 “ calvinistic doctrines, have thought proper
 “ to affirm, that you and some of your
 “ preachers have been villifying the ashes,
 “ and traducing the memory of the late Mr.
 “ Augustus Toplady. Nay, it was even
 “ positively alledged, that you told Mr.
 “ Thomas Robinson of Hilderthorpe, near
 “ Bridlington in Yorkshire, and the Rev.
 “ Mr. Greaves, curate to Mr. Fletcher of
 “ Madeley, “ that the account published
 “ concerning Mr. Toplady’s death, was a
 “ gross imposition on the public; for that
 “ he died in black despair, uttering the most
 “ horrible blasphemies; and that none of his
 friends

" friends were permitted to see him." All
 " which was repeated at Bridlington, by one
 " of your preachers, whose name is Rhodes,
 " who further compared Mr. Toplady's case
 " to the awful one of Francis Spira: and
 " added, " that the dreadful manner in
 " which he died, had caused a woman who
 " attended him to join your societies."

" Now, Sir, as many living respectable
 " witnesses can testify that Mr. Toplady de-
 " parted this life in the full triumph of faith,
 " and that the account published to the world
 " of the state of soul he was in during his
 " long illness, and at the hour of dissolution,
 " was strictly and literally a true one, you
 " are earnestly requested for the satisfaction
 " of your friends, *thus*, publicly to assure
 " the world, that you never advanced any
 " thing of this sort to Mr. Robinson, Mr.
 " Greaves, or to any other person; or else
 " that you will produce your authority for
 " your assertions; otherwise, it is to be feared,
 " that

“ that your own character will suffer much,
“ for having vented a most gross malicious
“ falsehood against a dead man who cannot
“ answer for himself, in order to support your
“ own cause and party.”

I am, Rev. Sir,

Your sincere well wisher,

VERITAS.

“ **W**E whose names are underwritten are
“ willing to testify upon oath if
“ required, that all the particulars publish-
“ ed to the world in the late Memoirs rela-
“ tive to the Illness and Death of the late
“ Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady are
“ strictly true; we ourselves having been
“ eye and ear witnesses of the same. And
“ therefore we all heartily join the author of
“ the foregoing Letters in calling upon Mr.
“ John Wesley to produce his authority for
“ what he told to Mr. Thomas Robinson of
“ Hilderthorp, the Rev. Mr. Greaves and
“ others, as specified in the Letter.

- ANDREW GIFFORD, D. D. *British Museum.*
- JOHN RYLAND, senior, *Northampton.*
- † THOMAS EVANS, Apothecary, *Knightsbridge.*
- WILLIAM ABINGTON, *Beaufort Buildings, Strand.*
- THOMAS HOUGH, Surgeon, No. 3, *Coven-try Street.*
- WILLIAM COWLEY, *Barbican.*
- JOHN COLE, *Upper Seymour Street, Port-man Square.*
- THOMAS JARVIS, *Charing Cross.*
- THOMAS BURGESS, *Mill Street, Hanover Square.*
- WILLIAM HUSSEY, }
- SUSANNA HUSSEY, } *Coventry Street.*
- * ELIZABETH STERLING, Nurse.
- JAMES MATHEWS, No. 18, *Strand.*

† Mr. Evans attended Mr. Toplady the whole time of his last illness until his death.

* Mrs. Elizabeth Sterling was the only nurse who attended Mr. Toplady until his Death, and of course must be the person falsely charged by Mr. Wesley to have joined his societies in consequence of his (Mr. Toplady's) awful departure. A charge equally false with all Mr. Wesley's other assertions.



